

Amendments to the Claims

Please cancel claims 7 and 8 and amend claims 1, 12, 15 and 18 as indicated:

1 1. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting method comprising the
2 steps of, in a central system:

3 receiving a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one sender;
4 automatically extracting report data from the report and automatically storing the
5 extracted report data in a memory;

6 for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;

7 associating the received report with the corresponding third party;

8 associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the
9 third parties; and

10 via the network, allowing access by the fourth party to at least a selected portion
11 of the extracted report data from the respective sender;

12 in which:

13 the third party is an agency;

14 the fourth party is a client of the agency;

15 the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work
16 tasks for the client;

17 the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client;

18 and

19 via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access by the ~~third party~~
20 agency and the client to at least a selected respective portions of the extracted report
21 data according to that third party's corresponding party-specific rules specific to each
22 party and allowing review, modification and/or annotation of the report data by the
23 agency and client according to each party's respective specific rules;

24 whereby the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the
25 one hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces
26 to the sender, agency and client.

1 2. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step of
2 transferring a copy of the extracted report data to the third party via the network,
3 whereby the transferred data resides at and is available for processing by the third
4 party.

1 3. (Original) A method as in claim 2, further comprising the following steps:
2 storing the extracted data in the memory in a predetermined common format;
3 before transferring the extracted data to any third party, converting the extracted
4 data into a format specified by the rules associated with that third party, whereby third
5 parties operating different hardware platforms and processing software may receive and
6 process extracted data from the same memory within the central system.

1 4. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step of storing in the
2 memory third-party indicated annotations associated with the extracted report data.

1 5. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the following steps:
2 receiving, from the third party, a confirmation or rejection indication relating to at
3 least a portion of the extracted, stored report data; and
4 upon receipt of the rejection indication, directing the sender to resubmit a
5 corrected report.

1 6. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the following steps:
2 storing an image of the report as received; and
3 via the network, allowing access by the third party to the image, whereby the
4 third party is able to confirm the accuracy of the extracted report data.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

1 9. (Original) A method as in claim 1, in which the report is a physical form,
2 further comprising the steps of, within the central system:

3 automatically receiving from any of a plurality of the senders, via a transmission
4 channel, an electronic representation of an image of the physical form, the form having
5 a plurality of data fields, each corresponding to an indicator of at least a partial value of
6 at least one of the parameters;

7 automatically identifying the location of the data fields in the received
8 representation of the image of the form;

9 automatically extracting from the identified data fields the at least partial values of
10 the corresponding parameters; and

11 automatically storing the extracted values in a predetermined common format in
12 the memory for subsequent processing.

1 10. (Original) A method as in claim 9, in which the electronic representation of
2 the image of the physical form is generated using a conventional facsimile machine,
3 whereby the transmission channel is a standard telephone line.

1 11. (Original) A method as in claim 9, further including the step of transferring
2 the stored extracted values to the third party via the network, all processing of the
3 physical form after transmission by the sender up to and including transfer to the third
4 party via the network thereby taking place automatically.

1 12. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting method comprising the
2 steps of, in a central system:

3 receiving a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one sender;
4 automatically extracting report data from the report and automatically storing the
5 extracted report data in a memory in a predetermined common format;

6 for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;

7 associating the received report with the corresponding third party;

8 converting the extracted data into a format specified by the rules associated with
9 that third party, whereby third parties operating different hardware platforms and
10 processing software may receive and process extracted data from the same memory
11 within the central system;

12 via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access, review and
13 modification and/or annotation by the third party to at least a selected portion of the
14 extracted report data according to that third party's corresponding party-specific rules;

15 transferring a copy of the extracted report data to the third party via the network,
16 whereby the transferred data resides at and is available for processing by the third
17 party;

18 associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the
19 third parties;

20 via the network, allowing access, review and modification and/or annotation by a
21 fourth party to at least a selected portion of the extracted report data from the respective
22 sender;

23 in which:

24 the third party is an agency;

25 the fourth party is a client of the employment agency;

26 the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work
27 tasks for the client; and

28 the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client;

29 the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the one
30 hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces to
31 the sender, agency and client.

1 13. (Original) A method as in claim 12, further comprising the following steps:
2 receiving, from the third party, a confirmation or rejection indication relating to at
3 least a portion of the extracted, stored report data; and
4 upon receipt of the rejection indication, directing the sender to resubmit a
5 corrected report.

1 14. (Original) A method as in claim 12, further comprising the following steps:
2 storing an image of the report as received; and
3 via the network, allowing access by the third party to the image, whereby the third party
4 is able to confirm the accuracy of the extracted report data.

1 15. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting system comprising
2 a central system that includes:

3 I/O means for automatically receiving from any of a plurality of senders, via a
4 transmission channel, a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one of
5 the senders;

6 form processing means:

7 for automatically extracting report data from the report and for storing the
8 extracted report data in a memory;

9 for at least one third party, for automatically storing a set of party-specific
10 rules in the memory;

11 for associating the received report with the corresponding third party; and
12 via a publicly accessible transmission network, for allowing access, review
13 and modification and/or annotation by the third party to at least a selected portion of the
14 extracted report data according to that third party's corresponding party-specific rules;

15 for associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least
16 one of the third parties; and

17 via the network, for allowing access, review and modification and/or
18 annotation by the fourth party to at least a selected portion of the extracted report data
19 from the respective sender;

20 in which:
21 the third party is an agency;
22 the fourth party is a client of the agency;
23 the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work
24 tasks for the client;
25 the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client;
26 and
27 via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access by the agency
28 and the client to respective portions of the extracted report data according to rules
29 specific to each party and allowing review, modification and/or annotation of the report
30 data by the agency and client according to each party's respective specific rules;
31 the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the one
32 hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces to
33 the sender, agency and client.

1 16. (Original) A system as in claim 15, in which the form processing means
2 includes pull request processing means for transferring a copy of the extracted report
3 data to the third party via the network, whereby the transferred data resides at and is
4 available for processing by the third party.

1 17. (Original) A system as in claim 16, in which the form processing means
2 further includes format conversion means:
3 for storing the extracted data in the memory in a predetermined common
4 format; and
5 before transferring the extracted data to any third party, for converting the
6 extracted data into a format specified by the rules associated with that third party,
7 whereby third parties operating different hardware platforms and processing software
8 may receive and process extracted data from the same memory within the central
9 system.

1 18. (Currently amended) A method for doing business comprising the following
2 steps:
3 receiving a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one sender;
4 automatically extracting report data from the report and automatically storing the
5 extracted report data in a memory;
6 for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;
7 associating the received report with the corresponding third party;
8 via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access by the third party
9 to at least a selected portion of the extracted report data according to that third party's
10 corresponding party-specific rules;
11 associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the
12 third parties; and
13 via the network, allowing access by the fourth party to at least a selected portion
14 of the extracted report data from the respective sender;
15 in which:
16 the third party is an agency;
17 the fourth party is a client of the agency;
18 the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work
19 tasks for the client;
20 the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client;
21 and
22 via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access by the agency
23 and the client to respective portions of the extracted report data according to rules
24 specific to each party and allowing review, modification and/or annotation of the report
25 data by the agency and client according to each party's respective specific rules;
26 whereby the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the
27 one hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces
28 to the sender, agency and client;
29 and
30 charging the third party for the access.